

MARIST SOLIDARITY CAMBODIA

2023

ANNUAL REPORT





# Marist Solidarity Cambodia

The primary activity of Marist Solidarity Cambodia is the work undertaken at LaValla School, LaValla Village and the support of disabled students in the community. This is called the LaValla Project. The aim of the LaValla project is to give children and young people with a disability a sense of their own value as individuals and as members of their family and community. The LaValla Project also looks to develop a sense of purpose and a sense of the many possibilities that could be before them. In essence the LaValla project strives to give the young people the means to live life in a meaningful way.



# Director's Report

Everybody has a dream of a life with dignity and acceptance. But for many young people living in remote rural areas, especially those with disabilities, who have no access to education, their dreams are unlikely to be achieved and their potential will not be fully realised.

For Cambodian children and young people with disabilities who become part of the MSC's LaValla Project, their dreams and hopes do become a reality. The dream to be accepted, to be treated with dignity, to have fun and enjoy life, to have an education, to be able to walk or have better movement, to have skills for employment and more - all these hopes and dreams are realized by our students.

At LaValla School students not only receive a comprehensive primary education, both in class at school and also while at home through online classes during the pandemic, but also access to health services they cannot access at home. They have the opportunity to live in an environment in which they can develop their many talents, a positive mind set and their social skills. It is an environment where all are equal and where abilities are more important than disabilities. It is where, for the first time in their lives, they are not defined by their disabilities.

After attending LaValla school most students move on to Secondary school, either in their home villages or, if that is not possible, whilst living at the LaValla Village. The Village students study at the local Government High School. This Inclusive Education program gives the students the opportunity to become part of wider society but with the ongoing support of their friends and LaValla Staff. It also ensures their continuing access to the Health and Rehabilitation services of the LaValla Project.

We continued our journey in building hope and changing the lives of children and young people with disabilities. For now and into the future, we will continue working towards improving the lives of children and young people with disabilities through offering them opportunities to access to education from primary to higher education and vocational training while providing health care and rehabilitation services. We also focus on maintaining a workplace of harmony and peace, whilst trying to be environmentally friendly, so as to generate the greatest positive impact on the students.

The staff - teachers, carers, resident Marist Brothers, programme coordinators, support staff, health care staff, cooks, drivers, grounds staff, maintenance staff, and volunteers – all contribute substantially to the success of the MSC's LaValla Project. Their care and commitment to the welfare of the students are extraordinary. They are wonderful role models. Without them there would be no LaValla Project. On behalf of the students, the Board, and the Marist Brothers of Australia, I thank them all sincerely.

Since our students come from the poorest families in the country, a project like ours depends totally on the generosity of others – funding agencies and individuals. These individuals and agencies are listed elsewhere in this report. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and profound thanks to all of them for their generosity and belief in the young people whose lives benefit so much from their support.

I also acknowledge the encouragement and support from our Local, Provincial and National Government agencies and all partners, which greatly underpin the smooth operation of our project.

Thank you all very much.

Dr Nop Sothun  
Executive Director



Everybody has a dream of a life with dignity and acceptance. But for many young people living in remote rural areas, especially those with disabilities, who have no access to education, their dreams are unlikely to be achieved, and their potential will not be fully realized.



# Bishop Olivier Schmitthaeusler

Bishop Olivier is the Catholic Bishop of Phnom Penh and a good friend of the LaValla Project. We thank him for this friendship and support and we pray for his well-being and for the work of the Catholic Prefecture of Phnom Penh





# Our Values

All students that are welcomed to the LaValla Project of Marist Solidarity Cambodia have disabilities, here they find that their lives are not defined by their disabilities and so can live as normal young people and develop their individual talents and personalities. They are also able to build up a resilience to cope with being disabled in the wider society.



Giving children and young people with a disability a sense of their own value as individuals and as members of their family and community. A sense of purpose and a sense of the many possibilities that could be before them. The means to live life in a meaningful way is the essence of what we strive for in the LaValla Project.

# Vision and History

Marist Solidarity Cambodia (MSC) is an international non-government organization which encompasses LaValla School, LaValla Village and a support Programme in the community. MSC aims to support young Cambodians with physical disabilities by way of furthering their education and assisting them into employment.

- MSC is an integral part of the mission of the Marist Brothers whose foundation in France 200 years ago initiated a commitment on the part of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, the founder, to provide schooling for poor children from marginalized families. That commitment and that dream are being realized here in Cambodia as MSC works for poor young people with disabilities wanting to give them new and better opportunities, hoping that their formal education will prove decisive in changing their circumstances.
- LaValla School established in Phnom Penh in 1998 is a government approved school in Cambodia providing a full primary school education for children and young people with physical disabilities.
- Villa Maria built by the Marist Fathers in 2005 has been replaced by the LaValla Village. This facility is the hostel for students of MSC who are attending the local Government High School in Takhmao.
- The community support programme based at LaValla assists approximately 100 young Cambodians with physical disabilities who live at home and attend their local schools.
- Many of MSC's students come from rural provinces and due to difficulties with transport they are residential.
- In 2010 MSC was established to integrate various programmes and sites into one entity, which we now call the LaValla Project, with its own Board of Directors under the aegis of Marist Brothers Star of the Sea Province.



**The Board of Directors of Marist Solidarity Cambodia**



# Special Visitors

In early December 2023, Br Peter Carroll, the Provincial visited LaValla. He wished to be a source of motivation, encouraging us to continue the work LaValla is doing in supporting children and young people with disabilities. As the President of MSC he attended the Board Meeting board where ideas and strategies for driving MSC to become more sustainable and impactful were gathered. Brother Peter encouraged the Board members to always work for the care and education of the young people in the care of MSC and for the sustainability of the program long-term.



## A visit from the Marist General House in Rome.

In May we welcomed a visit by Brother Angel Diego and Brother Francis Lukong from the Secretariate of Solidarity in Rome, Italy. The Brothers were in this part of Asia visiting the projects of the Marist Brothers. The Brothers were here for 5 days in May and were able to meet with staff and students as they came to understand the LaValla Project.

## Maryknoll

One event in 2023 was a sad one for LaValla. After more than 30 years caring for the most marginalised Cambodian Citizens the Maryknoll Sisters finished their mission here in Cambodia. The last Maryknoll Priest left Cambodia several years ago. Luckily there are four Maryknoll lay missionaries still serving here in Cambodia, especially Kylene who has been here with us at LaValla for 6 years.

We thank the last four sisters who left Cambodia at the end of 2023. Sister Regina, Sister Mary, Sister Ann and Sister Helene. We thank all the Maryknoll members who have been wonderful friends of LaValla from the very beginning of this project 26 years ago.

Three of the Maryknoll Sisters have also been members of the Board of Marist Solidarity Cambodia. Sister Luise, who was also the Chairperson of the Board, Sister Len and Sister Regina. Sister Regina also mentored the teaching staff here at LaValla and her wisdom and input was welcome and valued.

LaValla wishes all the members of Maryknoll peace and happiness back in their home in the USA.





### Volunteers

During 2023, the students at LaValla School and LaValla Village enjoyed the presence of two volunteers at the School and Village.

Ms Mona Hogg worked with the students to improve their English. Mona is from Germany and was here for 3 months before she returned to Germany to take up a teaching appointment. Her enthusiasm for teaching was appreciated by all the students.

Mr Tony McDonnell is certainly no stranger to us here at LaValla. Tony has been visiting LaValla since 2004 where he has led students from Marist College North Sydney on immersions. Tony has also spent longer periods here helping the students to experience the joys of music. Tony is also a very skilled photographer. Tony spent all of 2023 here living with the Brothers in community. Tony was due to leave to return to Australia early in 2024.

LaValla thanks both Mona and Tony for the gift of their time, energy and presence with us here at LaValla.





# LaValla School

At the start of school year 2023, there were 67 students (26 females) enrolled in the LaValla school from Grade 1 to Grade 6. 22 new students were enrolled as a result of the annual camp program. During 2023 All primary school students returned to at LaValla School and enjoyed their normal activities such as learning in class, playing with their friends, and doing activities as they did before the Covid 19 pandemic.

By late March 2023, all students had completed their exams and most students have moved to the next grade upon their return from the Khmer New Year break. During the year, students have been encouraged in the focus on their study. They have more interaction with outsiders and visitors as part of exchanging new experiences and knowledge.

With new teaching methodologies obtained from the teacher enhancement program, students were motivated through variety in their learning environment. Students had the opportunity of reading and group learning. With their commitment to study, the student's capacity to read and write improved gradually.

Students spent their time in the library where they read books or watched educational video presentations as part of the variety of learning activities. The computer classes help build their foundation in IT. Students had the opportunity to study English with Mona, a visiting volunteer foreign teacher, and interact with visitors who came to LaValla. Students enjoy meeting visitors and learn more of the English language.





MSC was able to maintain its supplement programs such as sewing and music classes where students have regularly attended these classes to gain more life skills. As part of the school program, each class was involved in weekly performance at Friday Assembly to build up their confidence and teamwork.

When LaValla began the New School Year in October, the new students increased the overall number compared to the first half of 2023. As presented in the table below, by December 2023, there were 84 (32 female) students. 37 of these students were newly enrolled through our annual camp program.

Another major event that followed the graduation ceremony was the 2023 Camp. This annual Camp event took place over 3 days from 23-25 September 2023 and activities included Health and hygiene lessons, art, games, computer skills, music and singing, crafts, sewing, science lesson, sports, swimming, visit to local park and zoo, entertainment, and movies. We had participants from many Provinces including: Takeo, Kampot, Kandal, Kampong Thom, Kampong Speu, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Cham and Phnom Penh. There were 66 children (42 boys and 24 girls) and their parents. Among 66, 37 of them (11 females) were accepted for enrolment at LaValla primary school for the new school year.



## Student Numbers

There were some increases in the number of our current students compared with the previous semester. As presented in the table below, the total number of students were 72 (32 female). Among this number 24 of them were newly enrolled through our annual Camp program.

	DECEMBER 2023			
	M	F	TOTAL	NEW STUDENTS
GRADE 1	10	3	13	13
GRADE 2	6	4	10	6
GRADE 3	9	3	12	5
GRADE 4	9	5	14	4
GRADE 5A	4	6	10	2
GRADE 5B	5	4	9	2
GRADE 6	9	7	16	5
TOTAL PRIMARY SCHOOL	52	32	84	37









# LaValla Village - Community Education

## Inclusive Education



### LaValla Village Students

All our high school students returned to LaValla and commenced their classes in early 2023.

Every student, especially the exam students (grade 12 and 9) spent the time required to undertake their study at school as well as extra classes in preparation for their national exam. At the start of the first semester, students committed themselves to improve their learning with close monitoring and motivation from our staff members. This created habit of reading and joining study groups, particularly at the village. Students who performed well during the academic year were awarded with the certificate of appreciation and small gift.

By June 2023, there were total of 51 students (female 29) staying at LaValla Village. There were three students have transferred to study at their community and another one has postponed her study due to health issues.

All high school students finished their school year (2023) successfully. In October, all 13 grade nine residential students passed their official exam. Five out of six community students (4 females) also passed the grade 9 exam at local high schools.

To prepare for the grade 12 exam, our students have accessed the E-school Program where students could do extra learning and practices with experienced teachers. Nine of our grade 12 students (5 female) sat for the national exam. All of them, except one student passed the exam. One student got grade C, four got D and three got E. All of them have applied for specialised studies at higher education institutions.

In 2023, apart from their study, our secondary and high school students have joined various external activities and programs both locally and internationally. For example, In June, 11 of our students (female, 2) have participated in ASEAN Para games Competition. As a result,



a team on E-sport (four members) won a Bronze Medal, a player on Shot Put won a Silver Medal, and one player on high Jump received a Bronze Medal.

Moreover, with support from MSC and the DAC, 26 students (11 female) entered the first round of the IT Challenge program. Then, there were 15 students (8 female) participated in the second round. 8 students (5 female) have reached the final round. By late October, 6 students (5 female) attended the final competition from Cambodia and 3 students (one former student) joined the Global IT challenges in Qatar. As a result, three students who joined the event at Abu Dhabi, United Arab won the third place (Bronze Medal) during the match. Up on their return, they have received a warm welcome by the delegates from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

By early December 2023, all of our high school students returned to LaValla and commenced their new school year 2023-24. By December 2023, there were 50 students (female 25) studying at secondary and high school from grade 7 to 12 and 3 students (one female) studying at university. With constant support and motivation from MSC staff members, students have committed to studying hard in order obtain good study results. Apart from regular school attendance, our students received extra classes such as Math, English and Computers at the LaValla Village.



### Community Students

During the first semester of 2023, our staff visited and followed up the progress of students at the communities. There were 62 students (32 females) who were supported by our project to continue their studies at local schools. This included 3 university students (2 females) and 9 students (4 females) involved in vocational training. Apart from supporting them with study material and fees for extra classes, our staff members have managed to communicate with local authorities and teachers to advertise the MSC program and identify other new children and young people with disabilities, who wish to join our school. Students who finished the skills training programs during mid-2023 have obtained employment.

By late 2023, our programme assisted the total of 78 community students (40 females) to continue their education from primary to university level and skill training. 75 students (39 females) studied at local school from grade one to twelve. One female student studied at university and two male students attended skills training. MSC continued supporting students who wished to shift from general education to a skills training program.

## Hostel Accomodation

### New setting in library

The renovation of library in the LaValla village was completed. All foundation part and the installation of glass wall were done in late November 2022 before the return of our high school students. The renovation of septic and drainage system in the village was done, correcting an issue with the bathrooms in accommodation areas.

To encourage the students in their learning, the renovation of the space adjacent to the computer lab was finished with the new roof, tiled floor and windows. A mobile bookshelf was purchased to store the books and learning material for students. This new setting of library and study zone provided the students with a space outside of their bedroom to gather and take part in study groups with supervision from our staff members.

All high school students were involved in extra Mathematic and English class at LaValla Village as part of improving their capacity. With the changes staff feel that students have more opportunities for future study and employment by the time they leave LaValla.

Regular staff and student meetings were organized to maintain students' momentum and reinforce their commitment on study. This was to also understand any emerging issues and the challenges facing at them school as well as at LaValla. With this information staff members could help to student to find ways to solve those issues.















# Health

Our health staff have worked collaboratively with all teachers, the brothers and care givers, parents and all ground staff members to continue to control the spread of the Covid 19 pandemic and monitor the general health of all students.

The staff work to provide the opportunity for our students to receive regular physiotherapy sessions, to access prosthetic adjustments and repairs and to access health treatment at hospital/ clinic, where needed.

Students who required medicines were supported by our health staff. Students who needed outside support were referred to the hospital in Takeo or to our NGO partners. We have also continued the process of improving the students' mobility through providing them with wheelchairs and walking frames when needed.

The below table summarized health care services received by our students at LaValla.

No	Type of Health Support	Total Students	Female
1	Consultation and medication at Lavalla Clinic	111	54
2	Referred to hospital or private clinic	22	4
3	Referred for Dental Care	88	42
4	Hearing Care	75	30
5	Physiotherapy and Hydrotherapy	Ongoing for all students	

We were still cautious about the Covid 19 situation and other diseases such dengue fever through monitoring students' daily health and implementing health protocols to ensure everybody was fully safe.

During late semester 1, many of our students succumbed to severe influenza, which required some of them to stay in the hospital and taking medicine for few days. This health issue potentially caused by the change of weather and proved to be contagious.

With the presence of all students at both LaValla school and the village, our health staff have scheduled to provide physiotherapy and hydrotherapy for our students. Our health staff members have also managed to provide treatment as well as to follow up students' general health as part of preventing any health issues for students during school time.

The table illustrates the numbers of our students who received services in improving level of mobility, functionality and health outcomes from Jan- Dec 2023. Students were encouraged to play various sport activities to improve their physical and mental health





No	Type of Health Service	Total Primary Students		Total High School Students		Total Treatment
		Old Student	New Student	Old Student	New Student	Sessions
1	<b>Physiotherapy</b>	33 (15F)	10	7(5F)	4(3F)	1068
2	<b>Hydrotherapy</b>	11(4F)	4	7(4F)	0	92
3	<b>Consultation</b>	80(32F)	37	50(25F)	15(6F)	449
4	<b>Rehabilitation</b>					
	New and Repair Prosthesis	12(6F)	1F	7(5F)	0	123
	New and Repair Brace	14(5F)	3M	6(5F)	0	
	Crutches	0	0	2(2M)		
	Wheelchair	9(1F)	5	5(2F)	0	
	Walker	4(0F)	0	0	0	
5	<b>Referral for Health</b>					
	Surgery	4(2F)	0	3F	0	
	Visual/Glasses	3(1F)	1F	3(2F)	0	
	Dental at Clinic	4(3F)	4	5(2f)	0	
	Eye visit to Clinic	1(0F)				
	General health - Hospital/Clinic	18(3F)	7	19(13F)	3(1F)	
	Ear Screening	83(35F)	37	0	0	2 Times
	Dental Screening	70(30F)	37	47(25F)	0	2 Times



















# Celebrations

On June 6th, 2023, LaValla celebrated the feast of the founder of the Marist Brothers, Saint Marcellin Champagnat. The day was celebrated with the participation of all students and staff member. The prayer, a short dramatic performance and songs helped to recall the great legacy of Fr Champagnat. At the end of the celebration of Champagnat Day, the students and staff members of LaValla congratulated fellow students who won the award from the ASEAN Para Games which took place in Cambodia.

Each year the LaValla Community celebrates Christmas through a drama retelling the birth of Jesus and a prayer followed by gift giving and fun and games and of course a dance.

And in 2023 LaValla celebrated the 25th year since the project was begun in 1998. Everyone gathered to remember the Brothers and staff who have gone before us and to thank God for the opportunity to be part of the LaValla family.







# Donors and Supporters



Barajas Family  
Butta Family  
Dougherty Family  
Michelle Chiou Foundation  
Renshaw Family  
St John's College Woodlawn

Other individuals / families who have contributed funds or goods.





# Immersions and Visitors

We were also able to welcome various visitors and school immersions to our LaValla. These visitors came to help with teaching and learning strategies with our students and teachers. Some visitors brought items to give to the students and to LaValla. This included school materials and food items. We thank all our visitors for their generosity.

In June, we welcomed a group of student volunteers from St Rita's College, Brisbane to LaValla. That was the great opportunity for students to interact with and learn from the visiting students from Australia.

In December our good friends from Woodlawn College in Lismore visited the students at LaValla.

While they are here at LaValla, our students have enjoyed the opportunities that come from living in the LaValla community. They have made new friends and taken advantage of an environment where their value and dignity are recognized. They have had the opportunity to meet and interact with many visitors and participate in various social and educational activities. Our students and staff members joined various national events as part of promoting the rights of people with disabilities.





# Year 6 Graduation





# Staff Development

MSC has continued supporting staff members to undertake various capacity development programs. One staff member has participated in a Leadership training program. Three of our staff members including the school principal, student service manager, and registrar have begun a program training in School Counselling. These staff members are using these new skills to support our students, especially those who face difficulties.

MSC has also supported our teachers to undertake Teacher Training Programs on how to improve teaching techniques. Our school principal has attended regular meetings with relevant departments and partners to exchange ideas and progress related to teaching. Apart from these local events, various internal workshop and seminars were attended by the director and staff members to enhance knowledge, build new networks and share experience about inclusive development.

To improve our students' capacity in using English in communication, we are planning to recruit a new local teacher of English. With proper tutorials and the opportunities to interact with visitors and other native English speakers, our students will be able to practice English more and be able to use English for further studies or assist getting employment after the graduation.





# Remembering



Commemoration for Brother Terry



Commemoration for Brother Darryl





# Finance Report

## MARIST SOLIDARITY CAMBODIA Profit and Loss Statement Jan – Dec 2023

	<u>USD</u>
<b>Income</b>	
Funding Partners Grants	420,194.12
Interest and Investment income	11,634.95
Sale of Vehicle	<u>11,700.00</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>443,529.07</b>
 <b>Expense</b>	
<b>PERSONNEL EXPENSES</b>	<b>208,567.33</b>
 <b>MSC ADMINISTRATION EXPENSES</b>	<b>27,326.83</b>
 <b>PROJECT EXPENSES</b>	
Project Administration	12,807.98
Lavalla School	8,764.62
Food and Provisions	129,070.01
Health & Rehabilitation	14,028.15
Student Support	13,339.71
Education	16,548.08
Family Support	355.02
Special Events	14,699.76
Vocational Training / Employment	807.44
Maintenance	39,415.31
Utilities	20,758.99
Vehicles and Travel	<u>25,989.88</u>
<b>Total PROJECT EXPENSES</b>	<b>296,584.95</b>
 <b>CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>42,257.00</b>
 <b>Total Expenses</b>	 <u><b>574,736.11</b></u>
 <b>Net Income</b>	 <u><u><b>-131,207.04</b></u></u>

# Life at LaValla

## Sports Events

Over the year of 2023, our students participated in various sport events both locally and internationally. Our students have participated their daily sport activities at LaValla school as well participating in friendly matches between students from different schools, including football, hockey or volleyball. Students and staff members of the LaValla Project have participated in the ASEAN Para games here in Cambodia.

## Family Support Programme

A program exists at the LaValla Project to support students' families who have experienced financial difficulties including providing food for their family. We also support students who have serious illness to get treatment at hospitals when their families have no finance to cover the cost of transport, food and possibly some medication.











































The LaValla Project  
Marist Solidarity Cambodia  
PO Box 1817  
Takhmao, Kandal  
Cambodia

email: [director.msc@marists.org.au](mailto:director.msc@marists.org.au)  
web: [www.maristcambodia.org](http://www.maristcambodia.org)